

Traitors and Heroes of the Early Republic

Once Tarquin the Proud had been expelled, in 509 B.C., Brutus and Collatinus assumed the leadership of the infant republic, as Rome's first consuls. Brutus promptly added three hundred members of the equestrian class to the Senate, whose numbers had been depleted by Tarquin's political murders. These senators were called conscripts (in Latin, *patres conscripti*) to distinguish them from the original senatorial families.

Collatinus served only a part of his term. His name, *Tarquinius Collatinus*, so frightened the citizens with their newly acquired liberty that they asked him to resign; although stunned by the request, Collatinus complied and went into voluntary exile.

Publius Valerius replaced Collatinus, but he too came under suspicion of aiming for monarchy. First, he began building a house set high on a hill, which could be made into a fortress and used for looking down upon the citizens. Second, when his colleague Brutus died (see below), he did not seek a replacement for him. To reassure the common people, Valerius had his house torn down and rebuilt on the lowest part of the hill, so they could all look down upon him, and he also started the custom of having the *fascēs* lowered in the presence of the people, to show that the power and greatness of the people were greater than that of the consul. Later Romans also believed (contrary to modern scholarship) that Valerius passed a law guaranteeing that a citizen convicted of a capital offense could appeal the sentence to the citizens. For the respect and love that Valerius showed the common people, he earned the nickname *Poplicola* (Lover of the People).

BRUTUS EXECUTES HIS SONS

During his consulship Brutus faced an attempt by some Romans to recall Tarquin, the exiled former king. Tarquin had sent a mission to Rome ostensibly to recover his property, but in reality to stir up unrest among the nobles, who (according to the members of the mission) would suffer the most under the rule of law of the republic: Under the rule of a friendly king, the nobles could be forgiven for petty violations of the law, but blind justice in a community ruled by law was incapable of showing favor. The conspiracy succeeded in drawing Brutus' sons, Titus and Tiberius, into the conspiracy. The members of the conspiracy signed letters pledging their support for Tarquin. A loyal slave, however, overheard their plans and reported the conspiracy to the consuls, to whom the signed letters gave absolute proof of the members' involvement in the conspiracy.

The consuls took immediate action, arresting and imprisoning the conspirators. The punishment for conspiring to bring back the kings was death, and since one of the duties of the consuls was to administer justice, Brutus was required to pass judgment on his own sons. The prisoners—including Titus and Tiberius—were stripped, flogged, and beheaded. The slave who had reported the conspiracy was rewarded with freedom and Roman citizenship.

Brutus did not need his consular powers to execute his sons: As *paterfamilias*, or "father of the family," he had the father's absolute power of life and death, called *patria potestas*, over his children.

Tarquin, frustrated in that attempt to regain supreme power in Rome, now persuaded the Etruscans to help him. Rome won the battle that followed, but lost its liberator, Brutus. Tarquin's son Arruns had seen Brutus on the battlefield and furiously charged toward him for a duel; Brutus took up the challenge, and in the duel they killed each other. Tarquin next sought help from Lars Porsenna, the king of the Etruscan city Clusium. Porsenna and his city at that time were very powerful, and the citizens of Rome thus became very worried about the approaching war with him.

HORATIUS AT THE BRIDGE

Horatius Cocles (One-eyed Horatius) stands out as a hero in the battle that soon followed. Horatius and other Roman soldiers were guarding Rome's one vulnerable point, the Pons Sublicius, when the Etruscans suddenly attacked. The Romans, caught by surprise, lost their customary discipline and fled, but Horatius stayed at his post. Having stopped as many of the fleeing Romans as he could, he convinced them to destroy the bridge behind him, to prevent the Etruscans from having a clear path to the city, while he held back the Etruscan army.

He strides to the first part of the bridge, easily distinguished from those Romans with their backs turned in flight from the fighting. In his hands, his weapons, ready for engaging in hand-to-hand combat; the enemy was stunned, marveling at his recklessness. Fear of disgrace convinced two men, Spurius Larcius and Titus Herminius, both famous by birth and deeds, to stay with him. With them he survived the first storm of danger and the most chaotic part of the battle. Then, since only a little part of the bridge remained, he forced them too to seek safety with those who were destroying the bridge.

Casting his fiery eyes threateningly upon the Etruscan nobles, Horatius now challenged them one by one to combat, or he thundered at them all that they, simply a pack of slaves of overbearing kings, were coming to assail the freedom of others, since they no longer knew what freedom was. They hesitated for a moment, each waiting for the others to start the battle. At last shame made them advance, and raising a shout on all sides, they all cast their javelins at their solitary enemy. When the javelins stuck on Horatius' raised shield, he no less stubbornly controlled the bridge with his formidable presence; then, when they were about to try to thrust him aside with an attack, they were filled with sudden fear at the sound of the bridge crashing down and the Romans' joyful shouting, and held up their attack.

Then Horatius says, "I beg you, sacred Father Tiber, to receive these weapons and this soldier into your gentle flow." Thus, he jumped, weapons and all, into the Tiber and, despite the many missiles falling from above, swam safely to his friends. (Livy II.10.5-11)

A statue of Horatius was placed in the Comitium, and he was granted as much land as he could drive a plow around in a day.

GAIUS MUCIUS SCAEVOLA (LEFTY)

Porsenna, frustrated at his failure to take Rome by storm, next tried to conquer it by besieging the city. Food soon became scarce in Rome, and the Romans' hope was dimming when Gaius Mucius, a young Roman aristocrat, presented himself to the Senate with his plan to assassinate Porsenna. The Senate consented.

When Mucius arrived at the Etruscans' camp, he stood in a densely packed crowd next to the king's tribunal. It happened to be payday for the soldiers, and the king's secretary, sitting next to the king and wearing almost the same type of clothes, worked busily as the common soldiers came up to him. Mucius feared asking which one was Porsenna, since his ignorance would betray him; as luck would have it, he stabbed the secretary instead of the king.

As he was making his escape through the frightened crowd, with his bloody sword opening a path for him, the king's bodyguards seized him and dragged him back, where a crowd had gathered because of the shouting. He was put before the king's tribunal. Even then, in such great danger to his life, he was one more to be feared than to feel fear. "I am a Roman citizen," he said. "People call me Gaius Mucius. I, your enemy, intended to kill you, my enemy; nor do I have less courage to die than I had to kill. It is the Roman way to do and suffer brave deeds. Nor am I the only one that has such hatred for you: behind me there is a long line of men seeking the same honor. From now on, be prepared for this struggle, so that you may fight for your life, hour by hour, so you may always have an armed enemy in your courtyard. We, the Roman youth, declare this war on you. You will fear no army and no battle. It will be a matter for you, alone, with men one by one."

The king, both outraged and terrified by the danger, threatened to have Mucius burned alive unless he immediately exposed the plot to which he had referred. "Look," said Mucius, "so you may understand how meaningless the body is for those who have their eyes set on glory!" And he thrust his right hand into a fire that had been lit for a sacrifice.

Repeat - not necessary to read

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When Mucius had burned his hand, as if he had no feeling, the king, astonished by the unbelievable sight, jumped from his chair and ordered the young man to be moved from the altar. "You may leave," he said, "since you have dared to hurt yourself more than me. I would applaud you for your courage, if your courage were benefiting my country. I release you from my captor's power over you; free, unharmed, and untouched, you may go."

Then Mucius, as if returning the favor, said, "Since there is honor for courage here too, and since you have gotten from me as a kindness what you were unable to get by threats, I'll tell you this: we, three hundred noble youth of Rome, have sworn an oath to take this same path against you. I drew the first lot; other leading young men will come, as the lot dictates, until your luck finally deserts you." (Livy II.12.6)

Porsenna was so shaken by Mucius' disclosure of the plot that he sent envoys to Rome to propose peace. Peace was made, and Porsenna withdrew his troops from Rome's territory. Mucius was rewarded with a plot of land west of the Tiber, which came to be called the Mucian Meadows. Mucius also received a nickname, Scaevola (from *scaevus*, -a, -um "left"), which means "lefty."

That is the story from the Roman historian Livy (59 B.C.-A.D. 17). Porsenna probably did take over Rome for a while; at one point the Romans had to agree to hand over hostages so Porsenna would withdraw his troops from Roman territory. One of the hostages was a clever and courageous girl named Cloelia.

The Livy portion - all is seen in Cloelia

Since the Etruscans had pitched their camp not far at all from the banks of the Tiber, Cloelia, one of the female hostages, fooled her guards and, leading the troop of girls, swam across the Tiber, among the enemy's falling missiles; then she returned all the girls safely to their families in Rome. When this was reported to Porsenna, he was at first outraged and sent ambassadors to Rome to demand Cloelia's return. The other girls did not matter much, he said. Then his anger turned to admiration; he said that her deed was far beyond even that of a Horatius Coclus or a Gaius Mucius; but he was of the opinion that if



Cloelia leading the children across the Tiber. (Drawing by Christina Marent Westmoreland)

she were not returned as a hostage, the treaty would be considered broken. If she were returned, however, he would give her back safe, untouched, and chaste to her relatives.

Good faith was kept on both sides, and the Romans restored their guarantee of peace, in accordance with the treaty; courage was not only safe in the king's court, it was even held in honor. After praising the girl, he said that he was giving her back with some of the hostages, and she could choose whatever fellow hostages she wanted. When all the young people had been brought forward, Cloelia is said to have chosen those who were in puberty. "After all," Cloelia said, "it is seemly for unmarried

girls, and proper in the opinion of all the hostages, that the age that is most vulnerable to being molested is most deserving of being free from the enemies' clutches." When peace had been restored, the Romans honored the courage unfamiliar in a woman with a new type of honor, an equestrian statue of a girl sitting on a horse; the statue was placed at the top of the Sacred Way. (Livy II.13.6-11)

ROME'S NEIGHBORS

The Etruscans (in Latin, Tusci or Tyrrheni, seen in the names Tuscany and Tyrrhenian Sea) to the north of Rome, who were trying to regain their power in Rome, were not the only enemies the Romans faced. The Gauls in the far north of the peninsula posed a constant threat to Rome and its neighbors, but the Etruscans were still powerful enough to keep them in northern Italy, away from Rome. Rome's enemies to the east were the relentless Aequi and the Sabines, and to the southeast, the Samnites. With the Latins to the south Rome had an alliance, but this did not always prevent hostilities between the Romans and Latins. To the south of the sometimes friendly Latins were the Volsci, a constant threat to the Latins and to the Romans. In the far south of the Italian peninsula were Greeks, who were not yet a large concern of the Romans. As Rome expanded its power, it naturally came into conflict with those peoples.

By virtue of their common language, institutions, and religion, Rome and the towns of Latium had developed a mostly religious, but sometimes political, alliance called the Latin League. During the monarchy Rome was the dominant partner in the alliance, but after the expulsion of the kings the city lost its superiority over the Latins. Rome attempted to reassert its superiority over the Latins at the Battle of Lake Regillus in 496 B.C.

Rome won the battle, but barely. Three years later, in 493, Rome and Latium reached an agreement, called the Foedus Cassianum, which formed a common army of defense; each party pledged to contribute an equal contingent. The side that had summoned the help of the others would take command.

The battle was important for other reasons, too. When the outcome was still in doubt, the dictator Aulus Postumius vowed a

temple to the gods known as the Dioscuri—the twins Castor and Pollux, the Gemini of the Zodiac—if they fought on the Romans' side. Suddenly the gods appeared on horseback, helping the Romans to victory. Roman legend also says that after the battle had been fought, but before news of the outcome arrived in Rome, two handsome young men, who were hot and sweaty, as if from fighting in a battle, were seen in the Forum, watering their horses; the two young men announced the Romans' victory. The next day, a letter from the dictator arrived in Rome, telling of the victory; try as they might, the citizens could not find the two young men, and concluded that they must have been Castor and Pollux themselves. In gratitude, the Romans built a temple of Castor and Pollux where the two had been seen in the Forum. Roman tradition also says that before the news of the battle had come to Rome, the two gods told one Roman man, who had no knowledge of the outcome, to go report the victory at Rome; to prove that they were gods, they stroked his beard, turning it a reddish color. After that his family was known as Ahenobarbus, or Bronze Beard. One famous descendant of the Ahenobarbus family was the emperor Nero, 550 years later.

~~The Three Hundred and Six Fabii~~

~~The Romans were facing wars with the Aequi, the Volsci, and the Etruscans, but did not have adequate forces to engage all three enemies at the same time. The clan of the Fabii decided to take a stand for Rome. The spokesman for the clan happened to be consul, and he proposed to the Senate that the Fabii take up the war against the Etruscan city Veii; then the Romans could concentrate their forces against the Aequi and the Volsci. The Senate agreed. The next morning, all the Fabii of military age—three hundred and seven of them—appeared at the consul's house, ready to go to war.~~

~~While patrolling the border between Rome and Etruria, the Fabii beat the Veientes in many small battles, and kept them from pillaging Roman territory. The Veientes became angry and insulted, since their large forces were being held back from their pillaging and looting by the small army of the Fabii. The Veientes then formed a plan to rid themselves of the Fabii.~~

bance. Brutus anticipated that he would be on his way and, not wanting to meet up with him, took a different route: at almost the same moment Brutus arrived at Ardea and Tarquin in Rome. The gates were closed to Tarquin and his exile proclaimed. The liberator of the city received a delighted welcome in the camp; and the king's sons were expelled from it. Two of them accompanied their father into exile at Caere among the Etruscans. Sextus Tarquin went to Gabii, apparently regarding it as his personal fiefdom; but there he was killed by those who had witnessed his murders and depredations and were bent on settling old scores.

Lucius Tarquinius Superbus reigned for twenty-five years. The monarchy at Rome from her foundation to her liberation lasted two hundred and forty-four years. Two consuls were then elected, in accordance with the precepts laid down by Servius Tullius, by the Comitia Centuriata under the presidency of the prefect of the city. They were Lucius Iunius Brutus and Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus.

BOOK TWO

free

1. The history of a free nation in peace and war will be my theme from this point on, the election of annual magistrates and greater obedience to the commands of law than to those of men. The arrogance of the last king caused the advent of liberty to be all the more welcome, whereas the rule of the earlier monarchs was such that they are deservedly reckoned successive founders of at least those parts of the city that they annexed to accommodate the new peoples each had added to the state. Nor is there any doubt that the same Brutus, who won so much glory in expelling Superbus, would have done a grievous wrong to the state if out of a premature desire for liberty he had wrested rule from one of the earlier kings. The plebs were a mixture of shepherds and adventurers who had fled their own lands. What would have happened to them when they won immunity if not liberty under the sacred protection of asylum? *Project* Uncowed by the absolute power of a king, they would have been stirred up by tribunician agitation and would have begun battling with the senators in a city not their own, before they had become united in spirit by commitment to wives and children and by love for the soil—a love that takes a long time to develop. The nation, not yet grown up, would have been torn apart by dissension. But as it was, a calm and moderate exercise of governmental authority fostered and nourished it so that when it matured and grew strong it was able to enjoy the excellent fruits of liberty.

One might more correctly say that the birth of liberty was owing to the annual nature of the consuls' tenure than to any lessening of the power the kings had possessed. The first consuls enjoyed all the rights and insignia of the highest office: they were only forbidden to hold the fasces* at the same time, lest double intimidation of the people should appear to be their aim. By agreement with his colleague Brutus was the first to hold the fasces, and he proved thereafter to be as keen a guardian of liberty as he had been its initial champion. First of all, while the people were in the first flush of enthusiasm for liberty, and to obviate their possibly succumbing to the entreaties or bribes of princes in the future, he had them swear an oath that they would allow no man to be king at Rome. Next, he

brought back the senate to its former strength of three hundred members, for its numbers had been much reduced by the murders committed by Tarquin; the new members were drawn from the leaders of the equestrian class. The tradition is also said to have grown up that when the senators are summoned into session they are styled Fathers and those Conscripted; for those he enrolled were called *conscripti*. This action contributed wonderfully to harmony within the state by emphasizing the joint interests of plebeians and senators.*

2. They then turned their attention to religious matters: those public rites that the kings had performed in person they now assigned (since no one wanted the return of a king) to an official called the King of Sacrifices. The priesthood was made subordinate to the pontiff, lest the title and office should in any way infringe their freedom, which was then a concern uppermost in people's minds. And in fact this concern, which extended to all areas and the most minute matters, may well have caused them to go beyond a reasonable limit. The mere name of one of the consuls, for example, who had never given offence in anything he had done, was detested. People said that the Tarquins had become all too used to monarchical rule; Priscus began it; then came Servius Tullius; but not even this interruption, when the throne belonged to someone outside the clan, had caused Tarquinius Superbus to forget it; through violence and crime he had claimed it as his birthright; and now, after Superbus' expulsion, Tarquinius Collatinus was in power! The Tarquins did not know how to live as private citizens; the name was an anathema because it was a threat to liberty.

Such talk had at first a gradual effect on men's feelings, but when it became widespread and had upset the people greatly, Brutus called them to a meeting. He first read out their oath that they would not allow anyone to be king and that no one at Rome should be a threat to liberty: this, he said, must be cause for the greatest vigilance, and nothing that might affect it should be misprized. He was reluctant to speak out of regard for the man in question, nor would he have said anything had not the love he bore his country compelled him. The Roman people were not convinced that their freedom had been fully realized: not only were members of the royal family who bore the name Tarquin present in the state, they were even heads of state. This compromised liberty, this prejudiced it. 'Lucius

Tarquinius,' he said, 'remove this apprehension of your own accord. We remember and we admit that you helped in expelling the king: complete now the good work you began by removing the royal name from Rome. Your fellow citizens here—and I strongly support them—will not only grant you all your property but, should it in any way be deficient, will add to it handsomely. Depart in an amicable spirit; relieve your country of what is possibly a groundless fear. People are convinced that monarchy will depart only when those bearing the name Tarquin depart as well.'

At first Collatinus could not speak from amazement at this strange and unexpected turn of events; and as he collected his thoughts to make a response, the leading men crowded about and begged him to follow the course Brutus had urged. He was less influenced by these others, but after Spurius Lucretius, his father-in-law and an older man for whom he had greater respect, began to ply him with entreaties and persuasive arguments to yield to the consensus of the nation, the consul feared that when he left office he would hear the same sentiments and would suffer the loss of his property and other humiliation besides. So he resigned the consulship and with all his property left Rome for Lavinium. Brutus, in accordance with a decree of the senate, proposed to the people that the entire Tarquin family should go into exile; in the Comitia Centuriata he declared Publius Valerius elected as his colleague, with whose help he had expelled the kings.

~~No one doubted that the Tarquins would try to regain the throne by force, but the war was slower in coming than people expected. What nearly destroyed liberty was something they had not feared: deceit and treachery from within. Among the Roman youth there were several of high birth who had lived under the monarchy a more irresponsible and pleasure-seeking life than they could at present, for as peers and companions of the young Tarquins they had grown accustomed to living in a royal manner. They missed the licence that had once been theirs; and with everyone now enjoying equal rights they began to complain among themselves that the freedom of others had brought subjection to themselves: the king was a fellow who could accede to one's requests, whether just or not; there were opportunities for receiving and doing favours; he could be both angry and forgiving, for he made a distinction between a friend and an enemy; the laws, on the other hand, were deaf~~

pomp as he could. Yet Brutus' death was honoured far more by the grief of the people, marked above all by the matrons who for a year mourned for him as for a parent because he had been such a stout champion of a woman's honour.

As for the surviving consul, the fickleness of public opinion brought a shift from popularity to hostility, and even to a suspicion that culminated in a nasty accusation. Gossip said he was aiming at the throne because he had not replaced his colleague and was building a house on the Velian hill: there on a lofty and protected site an impregnable bastion was under construction. The consul was distressed at the groundless nature of the accusation, which was widely repeated and believed. He therefore summoned the people to a meeting and himself entered the assembly with *fastes* lowered. The crowd was pleased at the sight of the symbols of office being made subordinate to themselves, for it was an admission that the people's power was superior to that of the consuls. When Valerius had called them to order, he praised the good fortune of his colleague, who had died after seeing his country freed, while yet holding the highest office and fighting for his country, and with his reputation still at its height and not yet the target of ill will; as the survivor he found that he had been reduced to the likes of the Aquilii and Vitellii. 'Will there ever exist', he asked, 'a man whose integrity is great enough to withstand the taint of suspicion? What grounds were there to fear that I, the implacable foe of monarchy, would ever be subject to the charge of seeking the throne? Even had I lived on the citadel and Capitol, how could I have believed I would be the object of fear on the part of my fellow citizens? Does my reputation in your eyes depend on so trivial a circumstance? Is your confidence in me so shaky that it matters more where I am than who I am? Fellow citizens, Publius Valerius will never be an obstacle to your freedom. The Velia will not threaten your safety. Nor will I move my house to just any piece of level ground, but shall place it at the foot of the hill so that you may dwell above the one you suspect. Let those men build on the Velia whose love of liberty you believe to be greater than that of Publius Valerius.' All the building material was brought down at once to the base of the hill and a house built at the bottom of the slope where the temple of Vica Pota now stands.

5. A series of laws was then passed whose effect was not only to relieve the consul of suspicion of aiming at the throne but to make

him widely popular; hence came his cognomen of Publicola, or People's Friend. Those laws were above all pleasing to the masses that sanctioned appeal to the popular assembly from decisions of the magistrates* and that made a man who tried to seek the throne a sacrificial victim to the gods.* Valerius as sole consul presided over the passing of these laws so that he alone would receive the credit for them. Only then did he hold an assembly to elect a colleague. Spurius Lucretius was chosen consul, but his advanced age did not give him the strength to carry out his consular duties, and within a few days he died. Marcus Horatius Pulvillus was elected in Lucretius' place. I do not find Lucretius listed as consul in certain old sources, for they put Horatius immediately after Brutus. I believe that because he did nothing of note in his consulship men forgot about it.

The temple of Jupiter on the Capitol had not yet been dedicated, and it fell by lot to Horatius to perform the ceremony. Publicola set out for war against Veii. Valerius' relatives were more disgruntled than was seemly that the dedication of such a great temple had been given to Horatius. They tried to block it in every way and, when their other efforts ended in failure, at the very moment when the consul was in the middle of his prayer as he held on to the doorpost, they struck at him with the ill-omened message that his son had just died and that he could not dedicate the temple with his house in the shadow of death. Whether he refused to believe this or possessed great strength of spirit tradition does not say, nor is interpretation easy. He permitted himself to be deflected from his task only long enough to order the body carried out for burial; then, keeping his grip on the doorpost, he completed the ritual prayer and dedicated the temple. Such were the events at home and abroad in the first year after the expulsion of the kings.

9. Publius Valerius for the second time and Titus Lucretius were the next consuls. The Tarquins had by this time fled to Lars Porsenna, king of Clusium. There they mingled pleas with advice, now begging him not to suffer them, Etruscans by origin and of the same blood and nationality, to be penniless exiles, now warning him not to allow the growing habit of expelling kings to go unpunished; unless kings defend their thrones with as much vehemence as nations seek liberty—which itself is sufficient attraction—the high-born will find themselves on the same level as the lowest; there will be nothing left in nations that is exalted, that rises above the ordi-

nary; monarchy would soon be a thing of the past, although it is the finest form of government among gods and men.

Porsenna, thinking it a good thing for there to be a king at Rome and one of Etruscan stock, advanced on the city in hostile array. Never before had such fear gripped the senate: the state of Clusium was at that time very strong and Porsenna's reputation formidable. Yet their fear concerned not just the enemy but their own citizens as well: the plebs might in their terror accept monarchical rule, willing to settle for peace at the price of liberty. The senate therefore took a number of steps to win the people's goodwill during this period. Special care was given to the grain supply, some being sent to the Volsci to secure it, others to Cumae.* Oversight of the salt supply, which was being sold at exorbitant prices, was taken out of the hands of individual entrepreneurs and wholly taken over by the state. The plebs were also exempted from custom duties and tribute, which were to be paid by the rich, who could afford them. The poor, they argued, made a sufficient contribution by rearing their children. This beneficence on the part of the senators proved in the hard times of famine and siege that were to come such a unifying force in the state that the thought of monarchy was as much an anathema to the lowest elements of society as to the highest. No single individual thereafter ever attained as much popularity by demagoguery as the senate did then by wise governance.

10. At the enemy approach all the country folk came into the city on their own initiative. The city itself was surrounded by a garrison force. Some parts seemed adequately protected by walls, others by the barrier of the Tiber. The wooden pile bridge, however, almost gave the enemy entrance into the city, but a single man, Horatius Cocles, stopped them; it was Rome's good fortune to have had him as her sole bulwark on that day. He happened to be stationed at the bridge when the Janiculum hill was captured by a sudden assault. As the enemy hurtled down the slope on the double and a swarm of his fearful fellow soldiers began to drop their weapons and withdraw from their place in the ranks, he grabbed one man after another and blocked his way; he swore by all that was sacred to gods and men that abandoning their posts was utter folly: if they left the bridge in their rear for the enemy to cross there would soon be more Etruscans on the Palatine and Capitol than on the Janiculum. He urged and pleaded with them to break down the bridge, using steel, fire, or

whatever means was to hand; he would take the brunt of the enemy onslaught with as much strength as a single man could muster. He then strode to the bridge's entrance; conspicuous amid the visibly retreating backs of those abandoning the fight and brandishing his arms in the enemy's face as he entered the fray, he stunned his opponents by his astonishing bravado. Yet shame kept two of his companions by his side, Spurius Larcius and Titus Herminius, both distinguished for high birth and achievement. With their help he withstood for a time the first burst of the battle's tumultuous storm; when only a small part of the bridge was still intact and those who were cutting it down screamed for them to get back, he forced them to retire to safety as well. Then his defiant gaze swept menacingly over the assembled Etruscan leadership; he challenged them by name and taunted them as a group: pawns of arrogant kings and careless of their own liberty, they had come to attack that of others. They held back for a time, each man looking to another to begin the fight. Shame then prompted them to move forward; raising a shout from every side, they hurled their weapons at their sole opponent. All those spears stuck fast in his out-thrust shield, nor did they cause him to bstride the bridge any less stubbornly, his feet firmly planted wide apart. They kept trying to drive him off by one assault after another; but the crash of the broken bridge and the shout of the Romans, exuberant at finishing the job, stopped them in their tracks in sudden panic. Then Cocles cried, 'Father Tiber, may you, I humbly pray, receive these arms and this soldier into your favouring stream.' Thereupon he leaped into the Tiber in full armour and, with many spears raining down upon him, swam in safety to his comrades on the shore, a bit of daring that posterity was to find more praiseworthy than credible.

His country showed its gratefulness for such courage: his statue was placed in the Comitium and as much land as could be traced around by a plough in a single day was given him. The enthusiasm of individuals was also conspicuous in the midst of such public honours, for each man, despite the great personal privation that followed, gave him something from his meagre private store.

11. Porsenna, repulsed at his first attempt, abandoned his plan to take the city by storm. He turned to besieging it by placing a garrison on the Janiculum, while he himself pitched camp on level ground along the Tiber's bank. Ships were brought in from many quarters

to prevent grain being brought into Rome and to provide transport to the other bank for raiding parties to fan out in various directions as opportunity offered. In a short time all Roman territory was so full of marauders that not only did everything portable have to be brought into the city from the countryside but all the livestock as well, nor did anyone thereafter dare to drive them to pasture outside the gates. The Etruscans were allowed to do this as much by design as from fear, for Valerius was awaiting an opportunity to attack a large number of them unexpectedly as they roamed the countryside, whereas retaliation for small injuries did not concern him, inflicting punishment for more serious offences did. And so in order to set a trap for the marauders he ordered a great many men on the next day to drive the livestock from the Esquiline gate, which was furthest away from the enemy. He was sure they would learn of it through the faithless slaves who were deserting a city besieged and suffering from privation. And they did in fact come to know of it from a defector, in consequence of which many more of the enemy than usual crossed the river in expectation of securing a great deal of booty in a single sweep. Publius Valerius then ordered Titus Herminius with a few troops to lie in ambush at the second milestone along the road to Gabii and Spurius Larcius with a light-armed contingent to stand in readiness at the Colline gate until the enemy passed by; they were then to go out and block the way, should the Etruscans seek to return to the river. Titus Lucretius, the other consul, deployed selected cohorts from the Caelian hill; these last were the first the enemy caught sight of. When Herminius perceived that the skirmish was under way he rose up from his place of ambush and cut down the Etruscans from the rear as they were confronting Lucretius. On the right and on the left, from the Colline and Naevian gates, the war cry was raised. In this way the plunderers were hemmed in and cut down, not having the strength to fight a battle and with all escape routes cut off. This proved the end of indiscriminate raiding on the part of the Etruscans.

12. The siege continued none the less, as did scarcity of grain and the high prices people had to pay for it. Porsenna's hope of capturing the city by entrenching himself in one position was interrupted by the scheme of Gaius Mucius, a noble youth. To Mucius it was intolerable that the Roman people, when subject to a monarch, had never been besieged in any war or by any enemy, but now, having

gained their freedom, were hemmed in by the same Etruscans whom they had so often defeated. This outrage, he thought, should be avenged by some great and daring deed. A plan to sneak into the enemy camp was at first formed on his own initiative, but second thoughts supervened: if he slipped away without consular permission or without telling anyone and by chance were caught by the Roman sentries, he would be dragged back and charged with desertion, which the present plight of the city would make quite plausible. He therefore approached the senate. 'I wish, senators, to cross the Tiber and enter, if I can, the enemy camp; my aim is not to plunder or avenge their raids, but, with the gods' help, to accomplish something far greater.' The senate gave its approval, and he set out with a sword concealed in his clothing.

When he had penetrated to the very heart of the camp, he found a dense crowd milling around the king's tribunal where the soldiers happened to be receiving their pay. Much of the business was being done by the king's secretary, who was seated next to Porsenna and was dressed much like him. Since it was he whom most of the soldiers were approaching Mucius was in doubt as to which of the two Porsenna was. Fearing to ask—for that would give his game away—fortune led him to make a random choice: alas, he cut down the secretary instead of the king. As he strode away, clearing a path through the panicked throng with his bloodstained sword, the uproar attracted an even greater crowd. The king's bodyguard seized him. Dragging him back, they placed the solitary prisoner before the royal tribunal where, even in this well-nigh hopeless situation, he was more an object of fear than afraid himself. He addressed Porsenna: 'I am Gaius Mucius, a citizen of Rome. I came here as an enemy to kill my enemy, and I am as ready to die as I am to kill. We Romans act bravely and, when adversity strikes, we suffer bravely. Nor am I the only one who feels this way; behind me stands a line of those who seek the same honour. If this is the sort of fight you want, go ahead; but it is one in which your life is at risk from hour to hour, one in which an assassin lurks at the very entrance to your palace, sword in hand. Such is the war the youth of Rome have declared against you. Pitched battles and the clash of arms are not what you should fear. Our business is with you alone, one on one.'

The king reacted in both anger and fear. He decided on a course of intimidation by ordering Mucius to be cast into the flames unless

he told him at once exactly what lay behind these dark threats of assassination. 'Look upon me,' Mucius replied, 'and realize what a paltry thing the body is for those who seek great glory.' So saying he thrust his hand into the fire that had been lit for sacrifice, and as it burned he gave no sign of feeling the terrible pain. The king was dumbstruck by this extraordinary act. He leaped from his seat and ordered the young man pulled from the altar. 'Leave this place. You have proved a stouter foe against yourself than against me. If you were a member of my own country I would congratulate you with bravos. But you are not, and I now release you untouched and unharmed, exempt from the laws that apply to prisoners of war.' As if to repay his generosity Mucius replied, 'Because you value bravery so highly, I will tell you as a favour what you could not wrest from me by threats: three hundred of the finest Roman youth have sworn to ambush you as I have done. The lot fell to me first. The others, as each man's lot comes up, will attack you in turn and in their own time, until fortune grants one of us to strike you down.'

13. Mucius was dismissed, and thereafter bore the cognomen Scaeuola from the maiming of his right hand.* Envoys from Porsenna followed him to Rome, for the king was greatly upset by the thought that he had escaped this first attempt on his life because of the assassin's mistake and that in the future he would have to undergo as many attempts as there were those who had sworn to kill him. He therefore took the initiative in offering peace terms to the Romans.

The proviso that the Tarquins be restored was rejected (Porsenna brought the issue up more in deference to the wishes of the Tarquins than out of ignorance that the Romans would refuse). He did prevail in his demand that territory taken from Veii be returned and that, if the Romans wanted him to remove his garrison from the Janiculum, they would have to give hostages. Peace was made on these terms; Porsenna led his army down from the Janiculum and withdrew from Roman territory. To honour his courage, the senate gave Gaius Mucius land across the Tiber that was thereafter known as the Mucian Fields.

Courage so rewarded filled the female sex with similar patriotic ardour. The maid Cloelia was one of the hostages and, when Porsenna chanced to pitch camp not far from the Tiber's bank, she led a group of young girls in escaping the guards, swimming the river as the enemy's weapons rained down, and safely restoring them all to

their relatives in Rome. When the king learned of this, he was at first incensed; he sent spokesmen to Rome to demand the return of the hostage Cloelia: he was, he said, not much concerned about the others. Admiration followed upon anger; what she did, he realized, surpassed the deeds of men like Cocles and Mucius; he then took the position that if the hostage were not returned, he would consider the treaty broken, but if she were given back, he would restore her to her people untouched and unharmed. Both sides kept their word. The Romans gave back Cloelia in accordance with the treaty, while the Etruscan king not only safeguarded and honoured her, but allowed the brave girl to choose some of the remaining hostages to take back to Rome. When all were brought before her, maidenly modesty is said to have led her to select boys of tender years, a choice that the remaining hostages approved, for the young were the most vulnerable to mistreatment by the enemy. With peace re-established, the Romans marked the woman's unprecedented courage with an unprecedented honour, an equestrian statue; a maiden seated on a horse was placed on the highest point along the Sacred Way.

~~14. The Etruscan king's peaceful departure from the city is consonant with the custom of auctioning off 'the property of King Porsenna' that has, among other formalities, been handed down from antiquity and is still in use today. The origin of this custom must either have begun in the midst of war and continued on in peacetime or have developed from a more peaceable beginning than the notice of a sale of enemy property would indicate. From the available evidence the most likely solution is that the property in question was what Porsenna left in his camp on the Janiculum, where he had conveyed the finest goods and choicest produce of nearby Etruria, and that he left it as a gift to the Romans, who were then in dire straits from the long siege: this property was then sold—rather than leaving it for the people to plunder as if it were that of an enemy—and that the phrase 'the property of Porsenna' signified more gratitude for his beneficence than auction of his royal fortune, which, after all, the Roman people did not possess.~~

~~Now that he had abandoned his war against Rome, Porsenna did not want his foray into the area to appear to be without result. He therefore gave his son Arruns part of his forces and ordered him to attack Aricia. The people of the city were at first stricken by this~~

Guiding Questions for the Reading on the Early Heroes of the Roman Republic

For the following questions, I just need your thoughts—bullet points, notes, etc. are fine. If you have trouble with answering a question, no big deal! Just do your best.

1. Why are these individuals (Brutus, Cloelia, Horatius Cocles, Mucius Scaevola) heroes of the republic? What actions define them as heroes?
2. How do they embody a spirit of “democracy” or of a “people’s government”?
3. Why were the Romans so concerned with kicking all of the Tarquin family out of Rome?
4. What does the political office of “King of Sacrifices” tell us about the nature of religion and government in Republican Rome?